

## Interpersonal Metadiscourse: Changing Patterns in Linguistics Book Reviews

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### ABSTRACT

This corpus-based study examines metadiscourse in linguistics book reviews across three key years: 2002, 2012, and 2022. Its aim is to trace the evolution and usage patterns of metadiscourse markers over this twenty-year span. Using Hyland's (2005) Interpersonal model, the research delves into both interactive and interactional metadiscourse. The study analyses various types of interactive metadiscourse markers, including transitions, code glosses, endophorics, frame markers, and evidentials. It also examines interactional metadiscourse, focusing on elements like self-mentions, attitude markers, hedges, boosters, and engagement markers. The findings show a notable consistency in the use of these markers across the studied years. Specifically, transitions are the most frequently used in interactive metadiscourse, followed by frame markers and others. In interactional metadiscourse, hedges are most prevalent, followed by engagement markers and others. By observing metadiscourse changes over two decades, the study offers insights into the evolving academic conventions and adaptations in writing practices in response to changing demands in scholarly communication. The results reveal a slight increase in the use of interactive metadiscourse markers and a small decline in interactional markers from 2002 to 2022. This trend highlights the dynamic nature of academic writing and emphasises the increasing importance of metadiscourse in structuring academic discourse and engaging readers. These findings provide insights for linguistics researchers and the broader academic community, underscoring the critical role of metadiscourse in effective scholarly communication.

**Keywords:** corpus-based; interactive metadiscourse; interactional metadiscourse; evolution; linguistics book reviews

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## INTRODUCTION

Academic writing is a critical evaluation tool that demands proficiency in skills such as critical thinking and evidence-based argumentation (Irvin, 2010). Unlike everyday arguments, academic arguments must be well-organised and thoroughly supported by evidence to effectively convey viewpoints and deepen the audience's and writer's understanding of the topic. Among various genres, the book review is particularly noteworthy for its role in enhancing academic literacy and understanding of genre structures (Diani, 2009; Birhan, 2021). Book reviews, as described by Hyland (2004), stand out in academia as they primarily involve the writer's assessments and opinions on another's text, making it a highly personal and expressive form. They serve as a platform for academic engagement, allowing community members to critique and interact with each other's ideas (Zou & Hyland, 2022). These reviews evaluate the academic quality, clarity, integrity, and relevance of the work being reviewed. The expression of these evaluations not only reveals the reviewer's identity and competence but also their status within the field. Moreover, writing book reviews helps establish a relationship with the audience, utilising metadiscourse to communicate ideas, positions, and arguments effectively (Birhan, 2021; Hyland & Zou, 2022).

Metadiscourse, a term initially introduced by Zellig Harris in 1959, offers a framework for understanding the application of language (Hyland, 2005). Although interpretations of the term vary, it is widely accepted that metadiscourse reflects both a writer's stance and an awareness of the audience's needs. Successful texts consider the readers' schemata, rhetorical expectations, and processing requirements (Hyland & Jiang, 2020). Essentially, metadiscourse encompasses the range of devices writers use to negotiate interactional meanings in a text, allowing them to express viewpoints and engage with readers as part of a specific community (Hyland, 2005). The metadiscourse markers that are mentioned in this study can be categorised into interactive and interactional resource. Transitions, frame markers, endophoric markers, evidentials, and code glosses are devices of the interactive markers whereas, hedges, boosters, attitude markers, engagement markers, and self-mentions are devices of interactional markers. The value of metadiscourse lies in its functions. Metadiscourse devices not only enhance learners' lexical competence but also enable writers to articulate their viewpoints and interact with their audience effectively (Birhan, 2021). These devices aid writers in clarifying their position within the text and assist readers in comprehending, organising, and interpreting the content (Birhan, 2021). Hyland (2010) noted that by systematically examining metadiscourse features, we can gain insights into how writers or speakers establish positions and align themselves with their readers in specific contexts.

In the context of book reviews, metadiscourse plays a pivotal role in facilitating effective interaction between reviewers and their audience (Hyland, 2010; Bal-Gezegin, 2016; Hyland, 2017; Lo, Othman & Lim, 2020; Birhan, 2021; Zal & Moini, 2021). It helps reviewers articulate their attitudes towards the book under review, a critical process in crafting an effective book review (Bal-Gezegin, 2016; Birhan, 2021). Metadiscourse markers are instrumental in understanding how authors position themselves, convey their ideas, and interact with readers (Bal-Gezegin, 2016; Hyland, 2017; Bal-Gezegin & Bas, 2020; Lo, Othman & Lim, 2020; Deng et al., 2021). In other words, effective communication in book reviews hinges on the strategic use of metadiscourse. Book reviewers need to consider their phrasing and positioning to achieve the benefits of engaging and informing the academic community. Book reviews serve not only to announce the publication of a book but also to establish the reviewer as a qualified expert in the field. In short, book reviews are crucial for academia, serving as a springboard for the evaluation and discussion of topics within

specific fields and contributing to the dissemination of research (Groom, 2009; East, 2011; Birhan, 2021; Hyland & Zou, 2022). Thus, book reviewers must carefully position themselves to address both interpersonal effects and the demands of their field (Tse & Hyland, 2006; Birhan, 2021; Zou & Hyland, 2022).

Despite their significance, book reviews have historically been overlooked by English for Academic Purposes (EAP) researchers and discourse analysts, as noted by Salager-Meyer et al. (2007), Groom (2009), and East (2011). Bal-Gazegin and Bas (2020) specifically highlighted a significant gap in the literature regarding the exploration of metadiscourse features within academic book reviews in linguistics. This gap underscores the necessity of this study, which aims to investigate the evolving paradigms of metadiscourse use, providing valuable insights into the development of academic writing and its contextual influences. Such research is crucial for enhancing EAP teaching resources, aligning with Hyland and Jiang's (2018) emphasis on the importance of recognising changes in academic conventions. This study focuses on linguistics book reviews from 2002, 2012, and 2022 to identify any notable shifts in metadiscourse usage and determine whether these changes are more pronounced at the beginning or end of the two-decade span.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### BOOK REVIEWS

According to Kaplan (2014), book reviews provide succinct information, aiding readers in evaluating, screening, or comparing books. Book reviews enhance a book's exposure, longevity, and visibility, and align with the contemporary trend of selective reading to determine a book's worth. Initially serving mainly an informative purpose, book reviews have evolved to offer more evaluative insights (Oinas & Leppälä, 2013) while still summarising content. This evolution reflects publishers' increasing selectivity, with reviews now offering deeper assessments of a book's quality and value.

The role of book reviews extends beyond aiding general readers. For scholars and graduate students, who face the challenge of staying abreast of developments in their fields, book reviews are a valuable resource. They provide concise, evaluative summaries that aid in selective reading, as noted by Junqueira and Cortes (2014). Zou and Hyland (2022) emphasised the role of book reviews in delivering critical information to academic communities and contributing to the production of knowledge and social cohesion within these circles. They offer academics a platform to share their perspectives without the need for extensive book analysis, serving as an accessible starting point for newcomers in a field (Salager-Meyer et al., 2007; Daini, 2009; East, 2011; Kaplan, 2014; Zou & Hyland, 2022). Birhan (2021) highlighted the importance of book reviews in enhancing academic literacy and genre awareness while Babaii and Ansary (2005) argued that understanding the linguistic features of book reviews can significantly improve the writing skills of novice English language learners, providing them with valuable insights into the reading and writing processes of these reviews.

Despite their importance, book reviews have often been overshadowed by research papers and remain a relatively neglected genre (Salager-Meyer et al., 2007; Zou & Hyland, 2022;). Recognising and addressing this oversight is essential to ensure that book reviews are duly appreciated and utilised effectively in both academic and broader reading communities.

## METADISOURSE IN ACADEMIC WRITING

In the realm of academic writing, the effective use of metadiscourse is fundamental for clarity and coherence. Metadiscourse, as delineated by Hyland (2005), encompasses two primary categories: interactive and interactional resources, each playing a distinct and vital role in academic discourse. Hyland (2010) described interactive resources as essential tools for writers to guide readers through the text. This category includes transitions, such as ‘in addition’ and ‘but’, which link ideas and arguments; frame markers like ‘to conclude’, orienting the readers to the structure of the text; endophoric markers such as ‘noted above’, ‘see Fig’ that refer to other parts of the text; evidentials, for instance, ‘according to X’, ‘(Y, 2016)’ for sourcing claims; and code glosses (‘namely’, ‘e.g.’) that clarify complex ideas. Interactional resources, conversely, focus on the relationship between the writers and readers, reflecting the writer’s persona and stance. This includes hedges (e.g., ‘might’, ‘perhaps’) to express caution, boosters (e.g., ‘definitely’, ‘it is clear that’) for emphasising certainty, attitude markers (e.g., ‘unfortunately’, ‘I agree’) revealing the writer’s feelings, engagement markers (e.g., ‘consider’, ‘note that’) addressing the readers directly, and self-mentions (e.g., ‘I’, ‘we’) to establish the writer’s presence in the argument.

The strategic use of metadiscourse is crucial in book reviews. A well-crafted review not only offers a clear critique but also positions the reviewer within the academic conversation (Hyland, 2000; Hyland & Tse, 2004; Junqueira & Cortes, 2014). Interactive resources help guide readers through the review, while interactional resources engage them and establish the reviewer’s scholarly stance. Therefore, a deep understanding of metadiscourse is essential for academic writers, particularly those writing book reviews. It enhances the effective communication of complex ideas and helps build a connection with the readers, thereby increasing the impact and reach of the academic work.

Numerous studies have been conducted to explore the use of metadiscourse within academic settings, offering valuable insights into this aspect of scholarly communication. For instance, Birhan (2021) observed a predominant use of interactive metadiscourse markers in book reviews, especially in the English Language discipline, underscoring a disciplinary variance in metadiscourse application. Besides, Bal-Gezegin and Baş (2020) found book reviewers more evaluative in their conclusions, using more attitude markers compared to the cautious tone of research articles. Hyland and Jiang (2020) tracked interactive metadiscourse changes since 1965, noting an adaptation in academic rhetoric to accommodate diverse audiences, emphasising the dynamic nature of academic discourse. Lo, Othman, and Lim (2020) highlighted the impact of field-specific practices on metadiscourse usage, suggesting a nuanced understanding of its role in effective academic communication. Similarly, Hyland and Jiang (2018) revealed an increase in interactive features, indicating a shift towards guiding readers through texts. Jalilifar, Hayati, and Don (2018) provided genre-specific insights, showing variation in metadiscourse usage between book reviews and blurbs. Bal Gezegin (2016) observed a universal distribution of metadiscourse in English and Turkish book reviews, hinting at its cross-cultural relevance. Junqueira and Cortes (2014) contrasted interpersonal metadiscourse in English and Brazilian Portuguese (BP) book reviews, and noted that only relational markers in the applied linguistic field had been used more in BP book reviews when compared to English. This suggest that romance language like BP tend to be less critical and more descriptive in nature. Lastly, Hyland (2010) emphasised the distinct metadiscourse strategies between Masters and Doctorate level writings, reflecting different academic expectations and practices. In sum, these studies highlight the complex nature of metadiscourse, prompting this research to analyse its evolution in linguistics book reviews over 20

years. Focusing on changes from 2002, 2012, and 2022, this study aims to deepen our understanding of the dynamic role of metadiscourse in academic writing.

Reflecting on the comprehensive body of research reviewed, it becomes evident that while various studies have explored metadiscourse in academic writing, there remains a notable gap. There appears to be no research focusing specifically on the evolution of metadiscourse markers in linguistics book reviews. This lacuna presents an opportunity for a novel investigation. Therefore, the present study aims to delve into the use of metadiscourse markers in linguistics book reviews over a span of 20 years, i.e. across three distinct points in time—2002, 2012, and 2022— to identify and analyse significant shifts and emerging trends. Such an investigation aims to shed light on the nuanced internal dynamics that underpin changes in these critical linguistic elements, as posited by Hyland and Jiang (2018). The choice of book reviews from these specific intervals is strategic, driven by their availability through online databases, which significantly streamlines the data collection and analysis process. The focus on the changing patterns not only contributes to a deeper understanding of the dynamic nature of academic writing in linguistics but also potentially reveals broader shifts in discourse practices over time. Such insights are invaluable for academics and students alike, as they navigate the evolving landscape of academic communication.

To address the research gaps, the primary objective of this study is to identify the types and frequencies of metadiscourse markers present in linguistics book reviews across three specific years: 2002, 2012, and 2022. Additionally, it aims to track and analyse the changes in the use of these metadiscourse markers over the two-decade span from 2002 to 2022.

## METHOD

### THE CORPUS

A corpus-based approach was employed to select book reviews from linguistics journals, focusing on those published in the years 2002, 2012, and 2022. This temporal spread allows for a comprehensive pattern analysis, providing insights into the evolution of metadiscourse practices over two decades. The selection of journals was guided by several key criteria to ensure the quality and relevance of the sources. Primarily, journals with a high Journal Impact Factor (JIF), were prioritised. This criterion was chosen because journals with a high JIF are generally recognised for their academic rigour and the influence of their published works within the academic community. Furthermore, within these high-impact journals, preference was given to book reviews that had garnered significant attention, as indicated by being listed as ‘most cited’ or ‘most viewed’ by their publishers. This approach was adopted with the rationale that more frequently cited or viewed reviews likely reflect a greater influence or relevance in the field (Gilmore & Millar, 2018), thereby offering richer data for analysing metadiscourse trends.

A total of 100 book reviews from each specified year were randomly selected, ensuring balanced representation across each time period. The choice of a random sample from the selected journals aimed to mitigate selection bias, providing a more accurate reflection of metadiscourse usage across the broader academic discourse. The journals included in the study were accessed from reputable databases such as Elsevier and Taylor and Francis, ensuring the reliability and accessibility of the sources. This access also allowed for a wide range of high-quality academic journals to be considered, further enhancing the robustness of the corpus (Nawawi & Ting, 2022). Table 1 below presents the specific journals chosen and the number of book reviews sourced from

each journal for each designated year. This detailed breakdown offers transparency regarding the source material, contributing to the credibility of the study and the reproducibility of its findings.

TABLE 1. Name of Journal Selected and the Number of Book Reviews Selected for Each Specific Year

Name of Journal	Number of book reviews selected for 2002	Number of book reviews selected for 2012	Number of book reviews selected for 2022
International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism	11	8	8
SYSTEM	16	22	16
English for Specific Purposes	10	13	8
Journal of Second Language Writing	0	7	9
Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development	0	25	20
Language Policy	15	8	0
Computational Linguistics	17	8	6
Journal of English for Academic Purposes	3	4	8
Language and Education	10	5	6
Journal of Pragmatics	18	0	19
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100
<b>Total number of words in each sub-corpus</b>	154735	140406	157796

#### DATA ANALYSIS

In this study, *AntConc* software version 4.1.4 (Anthony, 2022) was employed to analyse the metadiscourse markers in linguistics book reviews published in the years 2002, 2012, and 2022. The initial step involved utilising *AntConc*'s *Word List* function to identify the frequencies and types of metadiscourse markers proposed by Hyland (2005). This process provided a quantitative foundation for the analysis, enabling a systematic assessment of metadiscourse usage across the selected years. To ensure the accuracy and relevance of the identified markers, the *Concordance* function in *AntConc* was subsequently utilised. This function is instrumental in contextual analysis, as it helps in determining whether the identified markers are indeed functioning as metadiscourse. The standard context size was initially set to 10 tokens on either side of the marker. However, to achieve a deeper understanding of the context and to ensure the accurate interpretation of these markers, the context size was flexibly adjusted. In cases where the context within a 10-token range was insufficient to comprehend the meaning of the sentence in context, it was expanded to 15 tokens, and further to 20 tokens on each side if necessary.

The method utilised in the study allowed for a nuanced examination of how metadiscourse markers are embedded within the linguistic fabric of the book reviews. It also provided insights into the evolution of their usage over the two-decade span. Following the methodology of Hyland and Jiang (2018), common conjunctions such as 'and' and 'or' were excluded from the transition counts. This decision was based on the rationale that these words often function as default grammatical connectors rather than deliberate rhetorical strategies. By omitting them, the count of transitions markers would greatly decrease however, in return the analysis would then focus more sharply on the markers that are more likely to contribute to the rhetorical and discursive objectives of the text. In short, the methodology outlined here combines quantitative and qualitative analysis tools, offering a comprehensive view of metadiscourse in linguistics book reviews. This approach

not only identifies the prevalence of certain markers but also contextualises their usage, thereby enriching our understanding of metadiscourse strategies in book reviews.

## RESULTS

### INTERACTIVE METADISCOURSE MARKERS USAGE IN 2002, 2012 AND 2022

We examined the overall usage of interactive metadiscourse markers, which writers utilise to guide readers through their texts. These markers enable authors to manage the flow of information and embed their preferred interpretations within their writings (Hyland, 2010). Table 2 below presents the frequencies of these interactive metadiscourse markers for each specific year, with data normalised to per 10,000 words for consistency and ease of comparison.

TABLE 2. Interactive Metadiscourse Markers Usage in Years 2002, 2012, 2022 (per 10,000 words)

Category	Year 2002	Year 2012	Year 2022
Transitions	70.636	103.129	120.345
Evidentials	49.891	57.761	52.789
Code glosses	43.752	35.539	44.297
Frame markers	62.493	59.114	82.891
Endophorics	3.489	1.068	1.013
<b>Total</b>	<b>230.261</b>	<b>256.611</b>	<b>301.335</b>

A consistent pattern emerges from the data, showing transition markers as the most frequently used, followed by frame markers, evidentials, code glosses, and endophoric markers, which are the least used. Transition markers, leading with an average of 98.036 instances per 10,000 words, are pivotal in academic writing. They articulate semantic relations between main clauses and foster a rational flow of ideas in the text (Hyland, 2010; Cao & Hu, 2014; Birhan, 2021). Their predominant usage underscores their role in structuring arguments and guiding readers through complex academic discussions. For example:

- (1) *This chapter sketches an insightful picture of crisis communication, at the same time demonstrating how corpus analysis facilitates the interpretation of companies' strategies and customer feedback in such discourse.*
- (2) *In addition to these findings, the author points out that customers might not prefer companies' formulaic replies.*

In Example (1), the transition marker 'at the same time' is employed to signal to the readers that an insight and a demonstration are being presented concurrently in a specific chapter. This marker aids in clarifying the simultaneous presentation of these elements, thereby enhancing the reader comprehension of the chapter's content. In Example (2), the use of 'In addition' serves as a connector, introducing supplementary information to the ongoing discussion. This transition marker effectively guides the readers through the progression of ideas, helping them to follow and understand the logical flow and the addition of new, relevant points to the narrative.

Frame markers are notably prevalent in linguistics book reviews, with an average occurrence of 68.166 per 10,000 words, ranking them as the second most common type. These markers are instrumental in sequencing stages of discussion, articulating the writer's objectives, or indicating topic shifts, as noted by Cao and Hu (2014). Their significant presence underscores

the structured nature of academic discourse, emphasising the importance of clear signalling of the writer's purpose and the progression of ideas.

- (3) *This book has a number of strengths. First of all, this volume can clearly cater to a wide range of readers who are interested in L2 feedback because it is well-written and easy to read.*
- (4) *In spite of this comment, I wish to state clearly that the book is not dogmatic in tone, and in fact, has a pleasant, friendly style.*

For example, in Example (3), the use of 'First of all' functions as a frame marker to initiate a list of the book's strengths, guiding the readers through the writer's planned presentation of positive aspects. Similarly, in Example (4), the phrase 'wish to' is used as a frame marker, conveying the writer's intent to clearly state their opinion about the book's tone and style. Both instances illustrate how frame markers are employed to structure the narrative and clearly articulate the writer's intentions and transitions in their review.

Evidentials, which are used to cite sources of information external to the current text, rank third in frequency of use in academic writing, with an average of 53.33 instances per 10,000 words. As highlighted by Hyland (2010) and Birhan (2021), their role in academic writing is vital for substantiating claims and providing evidence. In the context of book reviews, evidentials add credibility and scholarly rigour to the evaluations and perspectives offered.

- (5) *What made the difference, according to Toohey, was not the superior cognitive or motivational traits of the successful children...*
- (6) *Moreover, the process of novice writers learning to become proficient in them is often left up to a process of 'trial and error' (Howe, 1990, p. 216).*

For instance, in Example (5), the phrase 'according to Toohey' is utilised as an evidential marker. It lends authority to the writer's presentation by attributing the information to a credible source. Similarly, in Example (6), the in-text citation '(Howe, 1990, p. 216)' serves as an evidential, grounding the writer's claims in scholarly research. This use of evidentials not only strengthens the arguments made but also aligns the text with academic standards of evidence-based discussion.

Code glosses, with an average of 41.196 instances per 10,000 words, are a notable feature in academic writing, especially used by authors to elaborate or clarify ideas, thereby enhancing reader comprehension. Hyland (2010) emphasises their role in ensuring that academic discourse is accessible and understandable, an aspect particularly crucial in texts dealing with complex or nuanced subjects.

- (7) *The method is to select one key discipline in each of the areas of science (natural, social and human), namely, chemistry, economics and history.*
- (8) *The authors do a good job tying psychological research which may seem abstract to language teachers to current trends in language teaching. For example, the authors point out the links between general research in metacognition and the work of...*

In Example (7), the marker 'namely' is used to explicitly specify the key disciplines selected in the study, which are chemistry, economics, and history, representing the areas of natural, social, and human sciences, respectively. This clarifies the exact subjects of focus for the readers.



Similarly, in Example (8), the phrase ‘for example’ is utilised to elucidate the writer’s point about the book’s effective integration of psychological research with current language teaching trends. It introduces an illustration of how the authors of the book under review successfully linked general research in metacognition with language teaching, thereby concretising the writer’s positive assessment. Both instances highlight the use of code glosses to provide clarity and aid understanding, reflecting the writer’s commitment to making their review both informative and comprehensible.

Endophoric markers, with a relatively low frequency of 1.856 instances per 10,000 words in book reviews, offer an interesting insight into academic writing practices. Birhan (2021) noted that these markers typically refer back to previously mentioned ideas. However, in book reviews, as per Hyland’s (2005) taxonomy, they often reference the original book being reviewed rather than previous segments of the review itself. This pattern results in their limited presence, indicating a specialised use in this context. The focus in book reviews is more on discussing aspects of the book at hand rather than revisiting earlier parts of the review.

(9) *Notwithstanding the above points, the volume has some strengths.*

(10) *As noted before, the quantitative approach may not appeal to everyone.*

Despite their rare use, endophoric markers are still observable in specific instances. For example, in Example (9), the use of ‘above’ serves to remind readers of points mentioned earlier in the review before introducing the strengths of the volume. Similarly, in Example (10), ‘before’ is used to refer back to a previously stated observation about the quantitative approach. These examples show how endophoric markers like ‘above’ and ‘before’ are strategically employed by the writer to link back to earlier discussions, guiding readers through a cohesive narrative. This usage underscores the writer’s effort to maintain continuity and coherence in the review, ensuring that readers can easily follow the flow of arguments and ideas presented.

The analysis highlights the vital roles of interactive metadiscourse markers in clarifying and structuring academic texts, particularly in linguistics book reviews. These markers are essential for organising content and enhancing readability, making texts more accessible to readers. The consistent use of these markers across the studied years indicates a stable pattern in academic writing. This consistency suggests that such markers are integral to academic discourse conventions, reflecting a longstanding preference for clear, well-structured, and reader-friendly communication in academic writing.

#### **INTERACTIONAL METADISOURSE MARKERS USAGE IN 2002, 2012 AND 2022**

This section delves into the usage of interactional metadiscourse markers in the selected book reviews, encompassing hedges, engagement markers, boosters, self-mentions, and attitude markers. Interactional resources, as Hyland (2010) elucidated, are employed by writers to actively involve readers in the discourse while simultaneously presenting their persona. Table 3 below presents a consistent trend across years 2002, 2012, and 2022 in the usage of these markers. Notably, hedges are the most frequently used, followed by engagement markers. Boosters rank third, self-mentions fourth, and attitude markers are the least used.

TABLE 3. Interactional Metadiscourse Markers Usage in Years 2002, 2012, 2022 (per 10,000 words)

Category	Year 2002	Year 2012	Year 2022
Hedges	98.297	96.790	89.799
Engagement markers	53.316	53.060	37.073
Boosters	47.888	31.052	27.440
Self-mentions	22.942	17.235	24.208
Attitude markers	16.479	16.808	15.589
<b>Total</b>	<b>238.922</b>	<b>214.945</b>	<b>194.109</b>

Hedges are the most frequently occurring metadiscourse markers in academic book reviews, with an average of 94.962 instances per 10,000 words. They primarily serve to express the writer's hesitancy in fully endorsing a proposition. This is evident in the use of terms like 'might' and 'perhaps' in Examples (11) and (12), respectively.

(11) *This part of the book might be useful to a computational linguist who needs a quick reference to one of the classic classification systems devised for organizing library stocks.*

(12) *Perhaps the most interesting insight to emerge from these chapters is the vs. talking at them.*

In Example (11), 'might' is used to suggest that a part of the book could be beneficial for a computational linguist, but without asserting this as a certainty. Similarly, in Example (12), 'perhaps' introduces a proposition as a possibility rather than a definite fact, indicating that the insight mentioned could be the most interesting, but this is not presented as an absolute. The regular appearance of 'might' and 'perhaps' reflects a characteristic approach in academic writing, particularly in linguistics book reviews, where authors often adopt a cautious and measured tone. Such usage conveys a level of uncertainty or openness to alternative interpretations, aligning with Bal-Gezegin's (2016) and Birhan's (2021) observations about common linguistic strategies in this genre. It indicates a preference for moderation and careful consideration in academic discourse, avoiding overstatement and leaving room for reader interpretation and further inquiry.

Engagement markers, averaging 47.816 instances per 10,000 words, facilitate a conversational and interactive tone. They are instrumental in establishing a connection between the writer and the reader, often used to negotiate ideas and encourage reader participation in the discourse (Hyland, 2005; Jalilifar et al., 2018; Birhan, 2021).

(13) *First, we note that such a multicultural nationalism would be ...*

(14) *We also need to consider the text features of source-based writing such as voice, stance, and engagement.*

In Example (13), the writer employs 'note' as an engagement marker, aiming to forge a connection with the readers. This is achieved by urging the readers to be cognizant of a specific idea that has been presented. Similarly, in Example (14), the writer uses 'consider' to engage with the readers, effectively inviting them to contemplate the characteristics of source-based writing. Both instances exemplify strategic language use to involve and interact with the audience in the discourse.

Boosters, averaging 34.460 instances per 10,000 words in academic writing, are indicative of a writer's certainty and assertiveness about a particular proposition. These linguistic markers are employed to emphasise the writer's confidence in their evaluations or assertions within a review. As Hyland (2010) noted, boosters play a key role in academic discourse by reinforcing the strength and validity of the writer's points, helping to convey a sense of authority and conviction. This usage reflects a deliberate strategy to assert and underscore the writer's perspective, contributing to the persuasive and authoritative tone often sought in academic writing.

(15) *This information is surely relevant to other research methodologies.*

(16) *The question of language versus dialect is obviously unanswerable, and, sensibly,*

In Example (15), the use of 'surely' allows the writer to convey a sense of confidence and certainty about the information presented. This word choice subtly emphasises the writer's assurance in their viewpoint. Meanwhile, in Example (16), the employment of 'obviously' reflects the writer's firm stance and clear conviction in their evaluation of the question raised in the book. Both instances demonstrate how the writer uses language to assert their confidence and assertiveness in their assessments and opinions.

Self-mentions, with an average occurrence of 21.311 per 10,000 words in academic writing, were one of the less frequently used markers. This aligns with the findings of the research conducted by Jalilifar et al. (2018), which states that self-mentions were among the least frequently applied interactional markers. Self-mentions provide a means for writers to insert their personal presence into the text. As noted by Hyland (2005) and Birhan (2021), this usage lends a more personal dimension to academic discourse. By explicitly referencing themselves, writers can directly express their viewpoints, experiences, or reflections, thereby adding a subjective element to the otherwise objective tone of academic writing. This technique not only humanises the text but also clarifies the source of ideas, opinions, or interpretations, making the discourse more engaging and relatable for the readers.

(17) *Here I am employing the author's notion of recursiveness to refine my own ideas about the relationship of language and thought.*

In Example (17), the writer's use of 'I' and 'my' serves as self-mention markers, effectively inserting their personal presence into the review. This approach personalises the narrative, making it clear that the ideas and viewpoints presented are from the writer's own perspective. Such usage of self-mention markers is a strategic way to convey ownership of the opinions and to emphasise the subjective nature of the analysis being provided.

Attitude markers, though less frequently used with an average of 16.292 instances per 10,000 words, hold a significant role in academic writing, particularly in book reviews. They are essential for expressing the writer's personal feelings and attitudes towards the subject matter. Despite their lower occurrence, these markers are instrumental in adding a subjective layer to the review, giving readers insight into the writer's perspective and evaluative stance.

(18) *Fortunately, the editors of this volume do not take such a view.*

(19) *I can agree with the first statement but not with the second.*

In Example (18), the writer's use of 'fortunately' conveys a sense of relief or positive sentiment. This word choice suggests that despite some negative aspects, there is a redeeming factor, something the writer views as a fortunate development. It is a way of expressing personal feelings about the situation being discussed, indicating a turn for the better. In Example (19), the use of 'agree' indicates the writer's concurrence with the first point being discussed. This attitude marker clearly communicates alignment with one aspect of the subject matter but not with another. It is a straightforward way of expressing agreement with one part of the argument while distancing oneself from another, underscoring the writer's selective endorsement of the ideas presented. The relatively infrequent use of attitude markers suggests that writers often prefer to maintain an objective or neutral tone in book reviews (Jalilifar et al., 2018). This tendency could be attributed to the desire to uphold a sense of academic detachment, as Birhan (2021) pointed out. It reflects a careful balance in academic discourse, where personal opinions and feelings are expressed judiciously, ensuring that the review remains primarily focused on the content and scholarly analysis rather than on the writer's personal biases or emotions. This approach contributes to the credibility and professionalism expected in academic publications, while still allowing for a measured expression of personal viewpoints.

The analysis of interactional metadiscourse markers in linguistics book reviews reveals their diverse roles in defining the tone, fostering engagement, and establishing the author's presence within the text. The uniformity in their application over various years suggests that these markers are integral to the established conventions of this genre, playing a key role in shaping how ideas are communicated and how readers interact with the content.

#### CHANGING PATTERNS OF METADISOURSE USAGE

Figure 1 illustrates the usage of metadiscourse in linguistics book reviews over two decades, providing insights into the evolving practices of academic writing. The data shows a modest but steady increase in overall metadiscourse usage, rising from approximately 469 instances per 10,000 words in 2002 to 495 in 2022. This trend indicates a growing reliance on metadiscourse as a tool for structuring and clarifying academic communication.

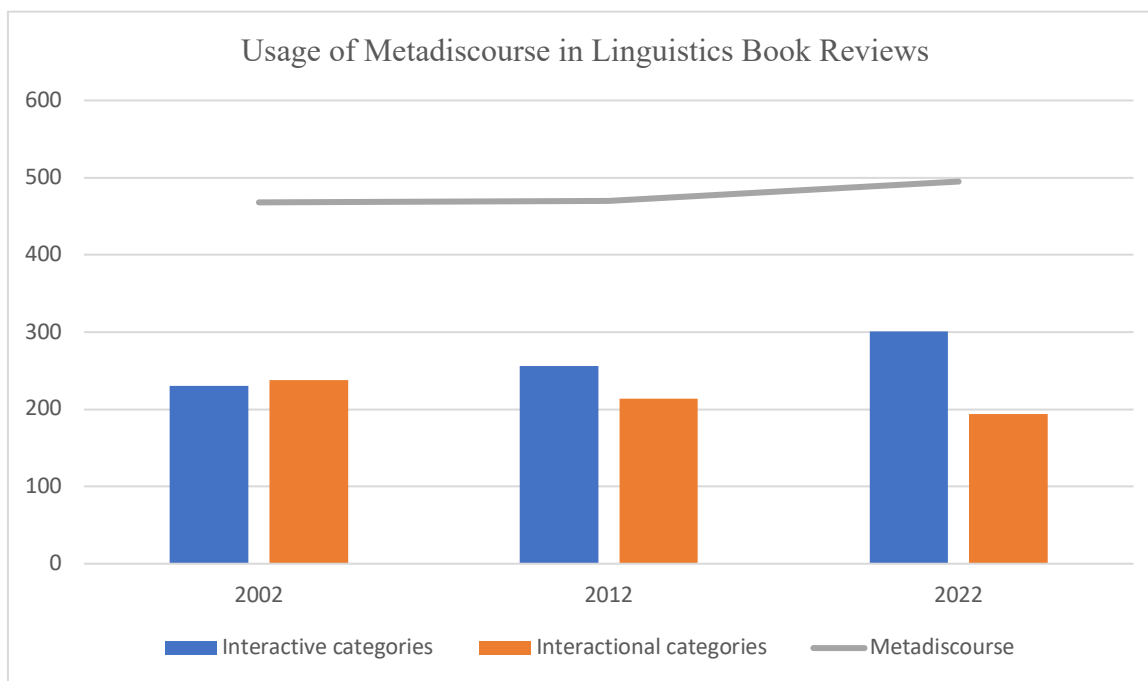


FIGURE 1. Changes of Interactive and Interactional Metadiscourse over Time (per 10,000 words)

The observed 3.5% increase in interactive metadiscourse, particularly in transitions and frame markers, suggests a shift towards more guided and structured academic discourse. Transitions, showing the most significant growth, are crucial for linking ideas and indicating logical relationships, thereby enhancing the reader comprehension and engagement with the text. This increase in transitions, along with a 1.02% rise in frame markers, underscores a trend towards more explicitly structured and reader-friendly academic texts. Such changes align with Hyland and Jiang's (2018) findings, highlighting an evolving academic style that favours clear guidance and overt persuasion.

On the other hand, the slight decrease in interactional metadiscourse usage, particularly in boosters and engagement markers, might reflect changing norms in authorial presence and argumentation styles in academic writing. The decline in boosters could signal a move away from forceful assertions, adopting a more balanced and nuanced approach in presenting arguments. This could be attributed to an increased awareness of the diverse academic audience and the need to accommodate various perspectives, especially in fields that are becoming increasingly interdisciplinary. Furthermore, the reduction in engagement markers might indicate a shift in how writers perceive and address their audience. As academic disciplines evolve and intersect, the assumption of shared knowledge becomes less certain, possibly leading writers to adopt a more inclusive and explanatory approach, rather than assuming a common ground with the readers.

In sum, the increase in interactive metadiscourse usage suggests that academic writing is becoming more reader-friendly, likely in response to a broader, more diverse audience and the need to guide readers through complex arguments. Conversely, a decrease in interactional markers points towards a trend of more objective, detached writing, possibly reflecting a preference for presenting information as factual and unbiased. These shifts in metadiscourse usage reflect the dynamic nature of academic discourse and broader changes in the academic landscape, such as

field diversification and audience expansion. Understanding these trends is essential for academics, researchers, and students, providing key insights into effective writing strategies aligned with contemporary academic standards.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study resonate with, yet diverge from, previous research on metadiscourse in academic texts. Birhan (2021) identified transitions and frame markers as the most frequent interactive metadiscourse markers in various disciplines, which aligns with our findings. However, Jalilifar et al. (2018) reported transition and code glosses as the most common in their study of book reviews and blurbs, differing slightly from our results. Despite these variations, a consistent trend in all three studies is the pre-eminence of transition markers. Their crucial role in connecting logical relations and aiding reader comprehension in academic texts is evident (Hyland & Jiang, 2018). The frequent use of transition markers, especially in longer academic texts, is pivotal for maintaining clarity and ensuring effective communication.

This study found hedges to be the most prevalent interactional metadiscourse marker, aligning with the findings of Junqueira and Cortez (2014), and Bal-Gezegin (2016) in English book reviews, though other studies like Birhan (2021) highlighted self-mentions, and Bal-Gezegin and Bas (2020) pointed to attitude markers as more frequent. Despite no consistent trend in the predominant interactional marker, hedges are commonly high-ranking across various studies, indicating their role in promoting cautiousness in academic writing, especially in interdisciplinary contexts where authors may be wary of fully endorsing assertions outside their primary expertise. The variability in the use of self-mentions and attitude markers could be attributed to factors such as the specific field of study, the research nature, and author preferences, especially in multi-author works where diverse viewpoints necessitate cautious language. These findings underscore the nuanced, dynamic nature of metadiscourse in academic writing, revealing a trend towards a cautious and measured approach, particularly influenced by the rise of interdisciplinary research.

This study investigated the changes in metadiscourse usage in linguistics book reviews between 2002 and 2022. While its findings are distinct, they reflect broader trends noted in academic writing research. These broader trends are notably illustrated in the studies conducted by Hyland and Jiang (2018). Their research, which analysed metadiscourse in research articles spanning from 1965 to 2015, identified a notable increase in the use of interactive metadiscourse coupled with a decrease in interactional metadiscourse, despite an overall growth in metadiscourse usage (Hyland & Jiang, 2018). This finding was further supported by their subsequent 2020 study, which specifically examined the trajectory of interactive metadiscourse over a fifty-year period, affirming the continuous rise in its usage (Hyland & Jiang, 2020).

The alignment of our findings with Hyland and Jiang's studies points to a more extensive, genre-crossing pattern in the domain of academic writing. It suggests an increasing emphasis on and recognition of the usage and functions of metadiscourse across different academic genres. This trend reflects an evolving academic ethos that increasingly values clarity, precision, and effective communication. Within this context, metadiscourse emerges as a critical component, playing a vital role in structuring arguments and enhancing reader engagement.

In linguistics book reviews, the rising use of interactive metadiscourse markers, such as transitions and frame markers, underscores a growing focus on guiding readers through complex discussions and aiding their comprehension. This trend is especially important for ensuring the accessibility of scholarly texts to a diverse audience, which may include readers outside the

immediate field of study. On the other hand, the decrease in interactional metadiscourse might indicate a movement towards a more objective and less personal style of academic writing. This shift could be attributed to the broadening scope of interdisciplinary research and the need to communicate effectively with a varied audience, including specialists, non-specialists, and stakeholders beyond the academic realm.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, this study contributes to the understanding of metadiscourse in academic writing and offers a foundation for future research and pedagogical practices. By expanding upon the findings of the study, future studies can continue to advance our understanding of effective communication in scholarly texts, accommodating the dynamic nature of academic writing and its changing demands. In particular, this study enriches the existing body of knowledge on metadiscourse. It offers valuable insights into how individual academic genres are adapting to the changing demands of scholarly communication. Metadiscourse, as mentioned in the literature review, plays a crucial role in enhancing the clarity and effectiveness of communication by highlighting how specific markers are employed in scholarly texts. This study, by shedding light on the types of frequently used metadiscourse markers in linguistics book reviews, provides valuable guidance for researchers, writers, and readers within this field, facilitating the creation of more comprehensible and engaging reviews.

This study highlights the critical need for educators and EAP learners to thoroughly understand metadiscourse markers specific to their academic disciplines. These markers are vital not only for recognising linguistic structures but also for structuring arguments, guiding readers through complex ideas, and establishing an author's credibility. With a deeper grasp of discipline-specific metadiscourse, educators can enhance their teaching methods by developing customised instructional strategies that focus on the metadiscourse elements most relevant to their students' fields. This could lead to the creation of specialised teaching materials like worksheets, writing prompts, and examples that emphasise effective metadiscourse usage. Such resources are designed to progressively build students' abilities to incorporate the relevant linguistic strategies into their academic writing, thereby improving their skills.

Furthermore, staying informed about the changing trends in metadiscourse is essential as academic writing evolves due to factors such as shifts in publishing standards and the expansion of academic audiences. Hyland and Jiang (2018) emphasise that these changes in the academic landscape, including more inclusive and diverse academic communities, necessitate new writing and communication approaches. Educators with this knowledge can better prepare their students to meet contemporary academic expectations and engage effectively in academic writing.

Nevertheless, the study is not without its limitations. It focuses only on linguistics journals from specific databases, and the language examined is solely English. However, this study illuminates the evolving nature of metadiscourse in specific academic writing, paving the way for future research to explore other relevant genres that have yet to be examined.

Future research can advance in several key areas. One method involves focusing narrowly on linguistics book reviews in high-impact, first quartile journals to understand the metadiscourse use in these indexed publications. Broadening the scope to include various disciplines could shed light on how metadiscourse is used differently across academic fields and how its use has changed over time. Comparative studies could expose distinct disciplinary approaches to metadiscourse. There is also potential to explore metadiscourse in book reviews across languages, enhancing our

comprehension of its global academic impact. Additionally, the role of digital and online platforms in shaping metadiscourse, especially with the rise of digital publishing and online communication, warrants investigation. An updated framework for analysing metadiscourse is necessary, as Hyland's (2005) taxonomy may not fully reflect current academic writing nuances. Revising this taxonomy to include new metadiscourse elements or reassess existing ones could better capture contemporary academic discourse shifts.

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